

Where the Elite Meet

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By G. William Donhoff

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LAST MONTH, as in every July since the turn of the century, an impressive group of middle-aged men made their way into the Northern California forests. Their destination was a 2,700-acre expanse of redwoods sprinkled with 129 camps connected by winding trails. Here, for two weeks each year, the U.S. power elite commune with nature and each other.

This extensive playground known as the Bohemian Grove is an isolated retreat, owned and operated by San Francisco's Bohemian Club, one of the most unusual and powerful male social clubs in America. Its members and guests are the bluest of the chips: captains of business and industry, congressmen and senators, cabinet members, past Presidents, the most visible minds in academe, the richest and most successful entertainers and artists.

The relaxed, intimate and cooperative atmosphere of Bohemia encour-

ages America's corporate heavies to let it all hang out, to relax off guard in mutual trust and harmony. But the Grove should be recognized for what it is—an important encampment where the ruling class of America reaches consensus and maintains its cohesiveness. The Bohemian Grove is no innocuous playpen.

The "Cremation of Care," the opening ritual of the two-week retreat, belies the political and social import of the Grove. It is spectacular, almost as impressive as its audience and designed to create an environment in which worldly business and worries are, at least formally, put aside.

Picture yourself seated in a beautiful open-air dining hall. It is early evening and the majestic redwoods tower above. You have just finished an excellent dinner and are sitting quietly with drink and a cigar, enjoying the gentle light and eerie pat-

terns cast by the gaslights at the dining tables.

Out of the shadows, from one of the hillslides near the dining circle, come the low, sad sounds of a dirge. A procession of men approaches; many carry torches and all are wearing pointed red hoods and flowing robes. Among them, in 1969, you would have recognized Edgar F. Kaiser, chairman of Kaiser Industries; three years later, Louis Niggesan, president of Fireman's Fund Insurance Company, and Karl R. Bendisen, president of U.S. Plywood/Champion Papers.

Some of the hooded men are carrying an open coffin. Inside lies a wooden skeleton wrapped in black muslin. This is the body of Care, which symbolizes the concerns and woes that important men must bear in their daily lives. Care is to be cremated.

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Richard Nixon played host at San Clemente recently to members of his Bohemian Grove "camp," among them newscaster Lowell Thomas.

By Jack Sullivan—The Salt Lake City Desert News

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The diners fall in line after the cortege as it trails slowly past the dining area into the forest. The procession comes to a lake where the priests and the body go off to the right toward a large altar. The followers move to the left, to a green meadow on the other side of the lake, where they sit facing the altar that looms skyward 50 yards in front of them. The altar is in the form of a huge Owl, illuminated at its base by a gentle flame from the Lamp of Fellowship.

A spotlight suddenly illuminates a large redwood, and a spirit, the hamadryad, emerges. It begins to sing, imploring the Bohemians to "burn away the sorrows of yesterday" and "cast your grief to the fires and be strong with the holy trees and the spirit of the Grove."

The spirit ends its song, returns to the tree, and the light fades. The high priest and his assistants enter the large area in front of the Owl. In a line that echoes the Episcopal call to worship, the high priest intones, "The Owl is in his leafy temple; let all within the Grove be reverent before him." He next invokes the motto of the club, "Weaving spiders, come not here," a line from Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," to remind members that within the portals of Bohemia they are not to discuss business and worldly concerns, but only the arts, literature, and other diversions.

After a chorus sings, the high priest proclaims, "Our funeral pyre awaits the corpse of Care," but Care is not ready to burn. He rises from the bier and cries, "Fools! Fools! Fools! When will ye learn that me ye cannot slay?" He spits upon the torches, there is a great explosion, and the fires go out.

The high priest falls to his knees in front of the great Owl, begging the bird for advice. The sagacious bird tells the faithful that no worldly fire can drive out Care; only fire from the Lamp of Fellowship on the Altar of Bohemia has that power. With that, Care is on its way out. It is cremated by torches lit from the Light of Fellowship.

As the pyre burns, the onlookers across the lake begin to rejoice. They shout, sing, dance and hug each other. They couldn't be happier if they were back in college and their fraternity had just won the intramural football championship.

It will be a night of story-telling and drinking for the men of Bohemia as they sit around their blazing campfires, renewing old friendships and

making new ones. They will be far away from their daily responsibilities as the decision-makers and opinion molders of corporate America.

BUT THE CAMARADERIE has important consequences, for these carefree get-togethers actually provide the cement that helps bind together many of the rulers of America, aiding them to reach consensus so they can act in unison to shape and influence national and corporate policy.

President Richard Nixon recognized the power of club members when, in 1967, he gave a speech at the Grove to rest their reaction to his views on Communism. That talk became the basis for a later public address. Other politicians find the off the record atmosphere of the Grove useful in introducing official government policy. Beneath the trees, corporate executives communicate orthodox big business ideology to politicians, scientists and other shakers. New scientific information flows from ivy halls to Government and industry. According to one journalist, the midsummer encampments "have long been a major showcase where leaders of business, indus-

try, education, the arts and politics can come to examine each other."

Politicians come to the Grove to make deals. Ronald Reagan, a frequent guest during the late 60s, used the 1967 encampment for an off the record meeting with Richard Nixon. There the two reached an agreement about the race for the 1968 Republican presidential nomination: Reagan agreed to stay out of the running unless Nixon faltered.

The following year, when political and media pressure prevented President Nixon from being the feted Lakeside speaker (the press objected to the off-the-record rule of the Grove), he sent his regrets to Bohemia, saying that while anyone could aspire to be President of the United States, only a few could aspire to be President of the Bohemian Club.

Indeed, the membership of the club is elite. Men come to the Grove



By Wm. Hamilton; © 1973 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

"Damn, but I get a kick out of you at these meetings, Evans! I wish to hell more of our directorates interlocked!"

from every part of the U.S.; 40 states and the District of Columbia contributed guests and members between 1965 and 1970. In large part they are drawn from the corporate leadership of America. One in every five San Francisco area members and one in every three from other parts of the country were listed in Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives. At least one officer or director from 40 of the 50 largest industrial corporations was present. Similarly 20 of the top 25 commercial banks were represented at the encampments. Men from 12 of the wealthiest 25 life-insurance companies were there. Other business sectors were also represented: transportation, utilities, conglomerates and retailers. Between 1965 and 1970, almost a third of 1969's top-level businesses, as ranked by Fortune magazine, were represented at the Grove by at least one officer or director.

There are several hundred members of the Bohemian Club, however, who are neither socially nor economically prominent. These are the artists, writers, musicians, actors and singers who provide most of the Grove's entertainment. They're architects, small businessmen, publishing representatives or advertising directors by trade, but talented enough entertainers to have become performers if they had chosen. These men are associate members who pay a fraction of the dues of full members. They maintain the Bohemian myth.

The bylaws of the Bohemian Club also ensure that at least 100 members shall be men who are connected professionally with literature, art, music or drama. This category includes Edgar Bergen, Bing Crosby, Tennessee Ernie Ford, George Gobel, Dick Martin and other stars.

Faculty members make up another special category of Bohemians. These men are generally professors at nearby universities: Stanford and the various branches of the University of California. But Grayson Kirk, until recently president of Columbia University, Charles E. Odegaard, president of the University of Washington, and other prominent educational managers also are members. In terms of honors and position, many in this group are the most prestigious members of the club. During 1965 to 1970 more than two out of every three were listed in Who's Who in America.

The corporate movers and shakers are dispersed throughout the 129 Grove camps. Although the camps are considered equal in status, some are more equal than others. Far and away the most impressive encampment of corpo-

rate executives is Mandalay. It has expensive lodgings high up the hillside along the river road overlooking the lake. "You don't just walk in there," said one club member, "You are summoned." Mandalay's all-star team of executives in 1968 included:

Stephen D. Bechtel, chairman: Bechtel Corporation, director: Morgan Guaranty Trust. Frederick H. Brandt, chairman: Dillon, Read (investment banking), director: National Cash Register, Colgate-Palmolive, Amerada Petroleum, CIT Financial Corporation, Falconbridge Nickel Mines. Lucius D. Clay, partner; Lehman Brothers (investment banking), director: Allied

Chemical, American Express, Standard Brands, Continental Can, Chase International Investment Corporation.

R. P. Cooley, president: Wells Fargo Bank, director: United Air Lines. Leonard K. Firestone, president: Firestone Tire and Rubber Company of California, director: Wells Fargo Bank.

John Flanigan, vice president: Anheuser-Busch. Jack K. Horton, chairman: Southern California Edison, director: United California Bank, Pacific Mutual Life, Lockheed Aircraft. Edgar F. Kaiser, chairman: Kaiser Industries, director: Stanford Research Institute, Urban Coalition. Lewis Lapham, vice chairman: Bankers Trust Company, director: Mobil Oil, Chubb Corporation, Tri-Continental Corporation, H. J. Heinz Company.

Leonard F. McCollum, chairman: Continental Oil, director: Morgan Guaranty Trust, Capitol National Bank.

John A. McCone, chairman: Joshua Hendy Corporation, director: Central Intelligence Agency (1961-1965), United California Bank, Standard Oil of California, ITT, Western Bancorporation, Pacific Mutual Life.

Rudolph A. Peterson, president: Bank of America, director: Dillingham Corporation.

Philip D. Reed retired chairman: General Electric, director: Bankers Trust, American Express, Kraftco, Bigelow-Sanford, Otis Elevator, Metropolitan Life.

Gardiner Symonds, chairman: Tenneco, director: Houston National Company, Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, Philadelphia Life, Kern County Land Company, Southern Pacific, General Telephone and Electronics.

Cave Man is another "heavy" camp. It is most famous as the camp of former President Herbert Hoover, but it may be more interesting today as the camp of Richard M. Nixon. The Californians, whose proximity gives them

more than their share of club membership, dominate such clubs as Poison Oak and such rituals as the Bulls' Balls lunch.

THE 1970 guest list is probably the most fascinating document available concerning the sociology of Bohemia; 341 guests came to the Grove from all over the United States and nine foreign countries. Some of the pairings between host and guest were what one would expect: Louis Lundborg, chairman of the Bank of America had as his guest Gaylord A. Freeman Jr., chairman of the First National Bank of Chicago; David M. Kennedy, former chairman of the Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company, then serving as Secretary of the Treasury, was the guest of Rudolph A. Peterson; president of the Bank of America. J. George Harrar, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, was the guest of Frederick Seitz, president of Rockefeller University. Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was the guest of one of his bosses, Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard. A. Mims Thomason, president of the United Press, was the guest of Jack R. Howard, president of Scripps-Howard Newspapers.

More intriguing were the government-business pairings. Paul Rand Dixon, chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, was the guest of oil man and Democratic fat cat Edwin W. Pauley. John D. Ehrlichman was the guest of Republican bigwig Leonard Firestone. Walter Hickel, then Secretary of the Interior and involved in negotiations concerning the Santa Barbara oil spill, was the guest of Fred L. Hartley, president of Union Oil, the company responsible for the spill.

All club members, even the rich and famous, must be good Bohemians, which means they must be willing to participate in the rituals and plays. They act in the elaborate High Jinks show or in the more ribald Low Jinks. They write poetry or tell after dinner tales. If they can't act or spin yarns, they can work. When Nelson Rockefeller visited the Grove in 1963 to give a Lakeside Talk, The New York Times reported that "he worked with Henry Ford II shifting scenery."

This tradition of creativity and pitching-in goes back to the time in the 1870s when the Bohemian Club was truly Bohemian, a club for artists and writers. But financial woes made the Bohemians turn to the wealthy for support, and by the 1890s the rich were more and more visible in their ranks. Since then, the newcomers have taken over the club, but the artistic tradition remains.

Despite the evidence that the Bohemian Club, and other highpowered social clubs are settings for the development of policy consensus among the prominent, they are not the major forums for developing policy on class-related issues. Other extra-corporate or extra-governmental organizations, conceived and run for and by the ruling class (such as the Council on Foreign Relations, the Committee for Economic Development, and the Business Council) are more important. These are the consensus-seeking and policy-planning organizations of the upper class. They sponsor meetings and discussions wherein wealthy men from all over the country iron out differences and formulate policies.

THEY ARE the training ground for new leadership within the upper class, the place where leaders hear the ideas and findings of their hired experts and the setting wherein they look over young experts for possible service as corporation or governmental advisers.

These groups are essential in developing policy positions that are satisfactory to the upper class as a whole. But they could not function smoothly without the oil provided by the Bohemian Grove and other upper-class social institutions. There the powerful get a fix on each other's styles and beliefs, and gain a sense of shared potency. The clubs create a desire among upper class members to reconcile their differences.

It is not enough to say that members

of the upper class are bankers, businessmen and lawyers who meet together at the Business Council and the Council on Foreign Relations to maximize profits and minimize taxes. We must add that they are Bohemians or members of other upper class social clubs.

The policies developed in these upper class consensus-seeking organizations and clubs reach government; they affect national policy. Says a Council on Foreign Relations publication, "Over a third of the Council's 1,500 members have been called on by the government during the last 20 years to undertake official responsibilities." The smaller Committee for Economic Development (CED) always has three or four trustees who are listed as "on leave for government service." In 1961, CED members were serving as director of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, counselor and chairman of the policy planning council of the Department of State and administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. In 1970, the group supplied the government with the chairman of the President's blue-ribbon-defense panel, the special representative for trade negotiations, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

Many members of these organizations also serve on special commissions and committees appointed by the President to recommend policies. All eight of the most important postwar commissions concerning defense and economics were headed by men who were

members of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Hired experts intimately identified with these organizations serve as government advisers. Thus, Henry Kissinger, closely affiliated with the Council on Foreign Relations throughout the 1950s and '60s, served as President Nixon's chief foreign-policy adviser before becoming Secretary of State. Herb Stein, longtime economist for the Committee for Economic Development, served as chairman on his Council of Economic Advisers.

The Business Council, the big daddy of them all, has two forms of contact with the government. Best known are its four yearly meetings with government officials. Two of these are two-day affairs in Washington, and two are four-day gatherings at the huge Homestead Hotel, a quiet resort for the well-to-do in rural Hot Springs, Va. At these meetings council members hear speeches by leading government officials, conduct panels on problems of general concern and talk privately with government representatives.

And many of those corporate leaders who sit on the Business Council and the Council on Foreign Relations romp together at the Grove. The overlap between policy-forming councils and ruling-class playgrounds is considerable. The Bohemian Grove, the New York

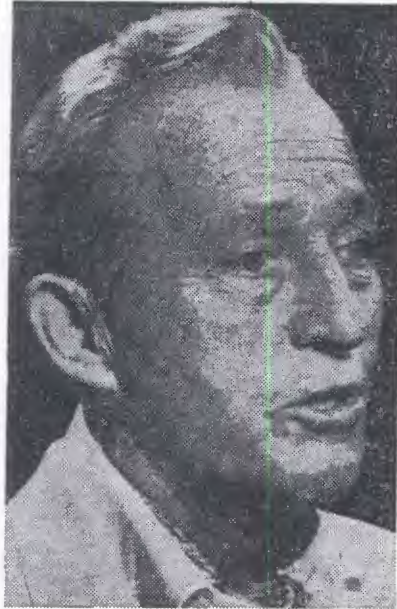
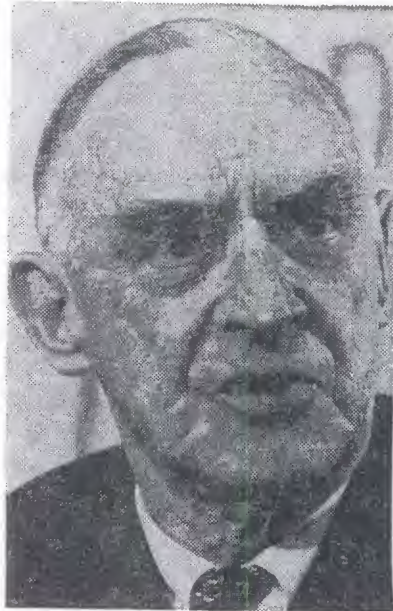
Links Club and the Business Council are the central points in the network of ruling-class institutions that embrace social interaction, business communication and policy formation.

Forty-nine members of the Bohemian Club also belonged to the Links Club, and both social clubs have strong ties to the policy organizations. Forty-one Bohemians and 70 Links members were members of the Council for Economic Development, 34 Bohemians and 56 Links members were on the Council of Foreign Relations, and 57 Bohemians and 78 Links were members of the Business Council.

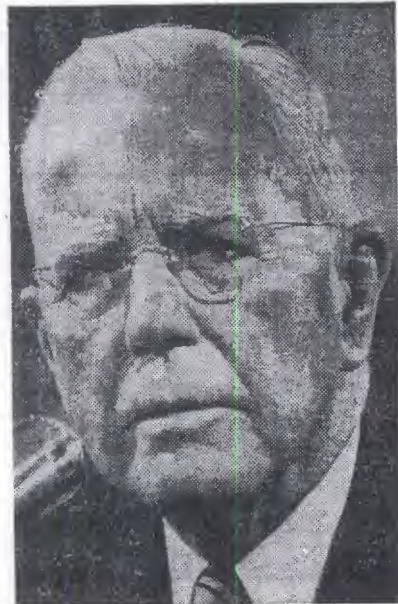
The interlocking overlappers are not a large percentage of the total club memberships, but the interlocking members are among the most prominent leaders in the ruling class. They are the people who span many interests and organizations, involving themselves in social, economic and political decisions of major consequences in a variety of issue areas.

The very fact that rich men from across the country gather in such close circumstances as the Bohemian Grove and seek unanimity in policy groups like the Business Council is evidence to me that a cohesive ruling class exists in this country. Even though some pluralists may remain unconvinced, we can all agree that the rich live very well indeed with their lavish Cremations of Care and other midsummer pleasures. They probably live just as well and as influentially as if they were a certified, recognized ruling class.

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Bohemian Club membership includes, from left, Lucius Clay,



Bing Crosby, Edgar F. Kaiser and John A. McCone.